AIR FORCE STATEMENT AND FCT SHEET ON REVIEW OF SELECTION OF AIRPORTS AND LODGING

SEPTEMBER, 8, 2019

Air Force leadership directed Air Mobility Command to review all guidance pertaining to selection of airports and lodging accommodations during international travels... While initial reviews indicate that aircrew transiting through Scotland adhered to all guidance and procedures, we understand that U.S. Service members lodging at higher-end accommodations, even if within government rates, might be allowable but not advisable. Therefore, we are reviewing all associated guidance. Even when USAF aircrews follow all directives and guidance, we must still be considerate of perceptions of not being good stewards of taxpayer funds that might be created through the appearance of aircrew staying at such locations. (review will include active duty, Guard Reserve).

- Air Force mobility aircraft, primarily C-17s, have increasingly leveraged Prestwick as a stopover location between 2015 2019 due to several key factors. Prestwick's 24-hour-a-day operations makes it a more viable option for aircraft traveling to and from the U.S. Central Command Area of Responsibility compared to other military stopover locations that have imposed increasingly restrictive operating hours.
- Additionally, AMC issued a flight directive to mobility crews in June 2017 designed to increase efficiencies by standardizing routing locations, with Prestwick being among the top five locations recommended for reasons such as more favorable weather than nearby Shannon Airport, and less aircraft parking congestion than locations on the European continent that typically support AMC's high priority airlift missions.
- By considering factors like these to save costs and increase operational efficiencies, Air Operations Center contingency planners have increasingly turned to Prestwick to develop route plans for lower priority contingency needs such as training, deploy/redeploy and Guard airlift missions.
- Between 2015 and 2019, AMC Total Force aircraft stopped at Prestwick a total of 936 times (*659 overnight stays), including 95 (*40) in 2015, 145 (*75) in 2016, 180 (*116) in 2017, 257 (*208) in 2018 and 259 (*220) through August 2019.

There are many reasons why a military location may not be available:

- The military location may not have operating hours that support the timing required for the en route stop
- Even if the timing is such that the military airfield is open, there are limits to the amount
 of aircraft that can be serviced and parked at military bases...they often "fill up" and we
 have to use other alternatives

As a result, the DoD makes arrangements to use civil airfields, with emphasis on identifying locations that are geographically aligned to common routes of flight, are open 24/7/365 to enable scheduling flexibility, and have sufficient parking to accommodate large aircraft and, if required, large numbers of aircraft

- Once a civil airport is selected for use, DoD also negotiates fuel prices at that location in order to obtain the best rate possible
- So when military airfields are unavailable, USAF aircrews are then directed to select one
 of these locations for transit. This is standard practice used at select civil airfields
 around the world

OK, but why Prestwick?

- Prestwick Airport in Scotland, is one such location that has been previously identified as a civil airport for use by transient DoD aircraft
 - This airport has a large parking area, is open 24/7/365, and has been contracted by DoD for fuel at standardized prices
 - Prestwick is also ideally suited along the route of flight to/from Europe and the Middle East; however, it is not the only one in that area of the world...typically DoD will ensure there are several alternatives available in order to account for the impacts of weather, air traffic, and other factors which could affect the availability of the airfield
- Bottom line, the availability of civil airfields like Prestwick is essential to ensuring that USAF aircraft can sustain the necessary speed and throughput required to accomplish our mission

Lodging...

- There are a multitude of factors which determine where aircrews stay when transiting en route locations
- When transiting military airfields, our first option is billeting on the military installation; however, many times the military billeting is unavailable due to capacity limits
- In these instances when military billeting is unavailable, to include circumstances when aircrews are transiting civil airfields, our policies guide the aircrews to stay at available locations which limit expense by remaining at or under the DoD maximum allowable rate, are suitable (for example, aircrew require lodging with "black-out" blinds in their rooms to allow for adequate rest during day-time hours if mission timing requires), and are reasonably close to the civil airfield in order to limit transit time
- For most civil airfields, there are multiple lodging options which meet these criteria, and the
 aircrew are assisted by US government personnel in making arrangements. Having multiple
 options to select from helps to ensure availability and also to avoid predictability which could be
 leveraged by adverse actors
 - At some civil airfields with less populated local areas, these multiple options may vary in distance from the airfield and can require transit times up to an hour or more
- In some cases, these lodging options are at locations which could be considered "higher-end" hotels; existing policy is that as long as the location is suitable and within the allowable DoD rate, aircrews may stay at a "higher end" hotel